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WILLIAM TELL

EDITED BY
CHARLES A. McMURRY

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Westfield Mass.

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FROM

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See page 84.

"SEE, FATHER! HERE'S THE APPLE."

WILLIAM TELL

TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED TO SCHOOL USE
FROM SCHILLER'S DRAMA

BY

CHARLES A. McMURRY, Ph.D.
OF THE STATE NORMAL SCHOOL, DE KALB, ILLINOIS

ILLUSTRATED

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A WORD TO TEACHERS.

"WILHELM TELL," in the drama of Schiller, is a masterpiece of one of Germany's first poets. It has been for nearly a hundred years one of the most popular plays in Germany, and has had a marked influence in cultivating a national spirit.

Its fitness for use in our common schools is due to those qualities which have given it such a high place both in literature and in popular esteem.

It is a heroic or epic poem in a dramatic form, with a world-hero as the center of interest. It springs out of the early mythical and semi-historical period of Swiss history, and has the simplicity of an early, patriarchal time.

The story falls in the very crisis of a sharp struggle between the simple freedom-loving mountaineers and Austria, whose unjust tyranny they resent. The background and setting of the action is the rugged and imposing mountain scenery about Lake Lucerne, in the very heart of Switzerland. The grandeur of this poetic scenery is in keeping with the heroic men and women depicted in the story. The imagination and fervor of the dramatist have brought the wild storm of the mountain lake, caged in between mountain walls, into closest sympathy with the storms of human passion.

In treating of a war of freedom on the part of the Swiss cantons against a superior power like Austria, we detect striking resemblances to the spirit of the thirteen American colonies of the Revolution. The meeting at Rütli between

the representatives of the three mountain cantons has the very spirit of union and of independence of our colonial assemblies. The story of Swiss freedom therefore fits in harmoniously with our colonial and Revolutionary history in the sixth and seventh school years. It is interesting to children to discover such resemblances, and especially to find the forcible expression of such common experience in the masterpieces of literature.

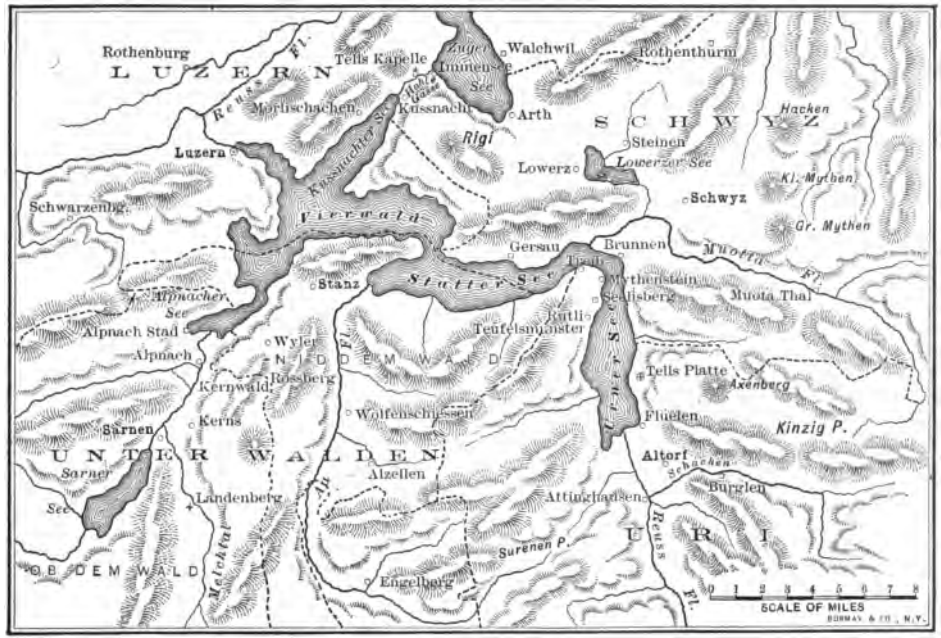
The pronounced dramatic character of this story is such as to awaken quickly the interest and enthusiasm of children. Their strong liking for dialogue and dramatic representation is well known. Our school readers and literary classics used in schools have not given much opportunity for the encouragement of the dramatic instinct in children. It seems probable that more good dramatic literature would greatly increase the spirit, vigor, and interest of reading lessons. Indeed, it would be well to encourage children, after reading such a piece of literature, to render parts of it upon such a stage as can be provided in the school. Where this has been done with such things as "The Merchant of Venice," "Julius Caesar," and "The Courtship of Miles Standish," it has aroused great vigor and successful effort. When children actually impersonate characters, they must of necessity fall into more natural and appropriate expression, and the acting out of the characters in the scenes is our nearest approach to the final realization of ideas.

It would probably be difficult to find a more dramatic piece of literature for children than "William Tell," and there is much variety of characters; yet the whole is simple in its thought and language, and the scenes are so striking that the action is easily interpreted. This story seems to be peculiarly suitable to children in about the sixth school year where we have used dramatized stories scarcely at all.

This is at least an opportunity for teachers to test the value of dramatic literature in these years.

In order to make the story a complete and connected whole, the parts omitted as not peculiarly needful for school use are given in brief prose narrative interspersed between the acts. In this way the essential parts of the story are more compacted and may produce a stronger impression upon the children than the entire play, which has been criticised by many as too long and even tedious in parts.

The teacher should study carefully the map, the pictures of mountain scenery, any good guide books on Switzerland, and the traditions upon which the Tell drama is based. The history of Schiller's own experience in gathering and sifting the materials for this play is of much interest. Carruth's German edition of Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell" (The Macmillan Company), has excellent notes and a historical introduction.



THE FOUR FOREST CANTONS.

PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE PLAY.

GESSLER, Governor of Schwyz (Schwĭz) and Uri (Ōorē).
COUNT VON ATTINGHAUSEN, a Swiss noble.
RUDENZ (Rōō'dĕnz), his nephew and heir.
WERNER STAUFFACHER (Stouff'ăcher).
REDING (Rĕdĭng).
} Men of Canton Schwyz.
WALTER FÜRST (Fĭrst).
WILLIAM TELL.
RÖSSELMANN (Rāsselman), the priest.
PETERMANN, the sexton.
KUONI (Kūōnē), the shepherd.
WERNI (Wĕrnē), the hunter.
RUODI (Rūōdē), the fisher.
} Men of Canton Uri.
MELCHTHAL (Mĕlchtăl).
BAUMGARTEN.
WINKELRIED.
} Men of Canton Unterwalden.
GERSAU (Gĕrsou).
JENNI (Yĕnnē), a fisher boy.
SEPPI (Sĕp'pē), a shepherd boy.
GERTRUDE, Stauffacher's wife.
HEDWIG, Tell's wife and Fürst's daughter.
BERTHA, a rich Swiss heiress.
ARMGARD, wife of a poor peasant.
WALTER AND WILLIAM, Tell's boys.
FRIESSHARDT (Frēshärt).
LEUTHOLD (Loithold).
} Soldiers in Gessler's pay.
RUDOLPH, Gessler's marshal and chief officer.
STÜSSI (Stēssē), the field warden.
STIER VON URI, master stone mason and workman.
BROTHERS OF MERCY, monks forming the chorus.

WILLIAM TELL.

In the central part of Switzerland, deep among the rugged mountain valleys, lies a long, crooked lake, known as Lucerne, and sometimes called "The Lake of the Four Forest Cantons." The mountains rise rough and craggy along its shores, or the slopes are covered with dark forests, which give place to fields of ice and snow far up the mountain sides.

Every summer, thousands of tourists visit this region, famous for the beauty of its lake and mountain scenery. The people who dwelt in these valleys hundreds of years ago, as now, were a hardy German folk, who loved the wildness and freedom of their mountain home. The country about the lake was divided into four cantons, or districts—Schwyz, Uri, Unterwald, and Lucerne. But, though they were separated more or less by lake and mountains, the people of the four cantons felt that they were brothers, and must stand together in time of danger. They were of simple German stock—herdsmen, fishers, farmers, and hunters. The narrow valleys and hillsides by the streams flowing into the lake were rich and fruitful with little fields and gardens. The mountain slopes furnished pasture for their flocks and herds, and the forests supplied wood and game for the fireside.

Living apart in this rugged mountain region, difficult to enter from without, the people were accustomed to rule

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themselves, and had been but little molested by rulers and kings. They had sometimes sent recruits to the armies of the Emperor of Germany, and in return expected some degree of protection in time of danger; but they had held fast the simple rights of freemen.

According to Swiss traditions, a change came about in 1304, when the King of Austria, who at that time was also Emperor of Germany, desired to make the Swiss cantons a part of his kingdom and to establish a firm rule over them. To carry out this purpose the king appointed two of his officers, Gessler and Landenberg, governors in the cantons, with instructions to bring the people into a closer obedience. But the people of the cantons were not willing to give up their ancient freedom and to become mere vassals of the king.

About the southeastern end of the lake lay the canton of Uri, in which, according to old Swiss tradition, dwelt William Tell. The chief town of this canton, Altorf, lay two or three miles beyond the south end of the lake. In it dwelt Walter Fürst, a man of high repute among the people, and the father of Tell's wife. Across from Altorf, beyond the deep mountain valley of the Schächen, was the village of Bürglen, near which stood the simple home of William Tell. Before the house lay the gorge of the Schächen, and behind it stood the mountains. In this spot dwelt Tell with his wife, Hedwig, and two boys, Walter and William. As a hunter Tell loved to roam among the mountains and forests in search of game. He was hardy and bold, and especially skillful with the crossbow.

In the valley of the Reuss, upon his estate near Altorf, lived a nobleman named Attinghausen. He was a very old man; who loved the peasant folk about him, and held fast to the old Swiss customs. His nephew and heir, Rudenz, was at first inclined to throw in his lot with Gessler and

the party of the king, but afterwards joined the party of the common people.

One afternoon about the 1st of September, 1307, Kuoni, the shepherd of Count Attinghausen, was driving his cattle and sheep down the mountain side, near the westward bend of Lake Lucerne, opposite to the town of Schwyz. As he descended the path along the rocky edge of the lake he met an Alpine hunter, Werni, and further down by the water's edge he came to the hut of Ruodi, the fisherman, and his boy.

The first scene opens with a view of this rocky coast, curving into a small bay, and the fisher's hut near the water. Beyond the lake one sees the green meadows, the villages, and farmhouses of Canton Schwyz lying in the clear sunlight. On the left the mountain summits are hung with clouds, and on the right the ice fields are seen. A fisher boy glides along the shore in a boat, and his song is heard mingling with the music of bells from the herds, coming down the mountain road.

THE SONG OF THE FISHER BOY.

(*From his boat.*)

The sea smiles in glee, entranced with its murmurs,
On green, sunny marge the fisher boy slumbers,
His dreams flow in music
Like songs from the skies,
As the voices of angels
In Paradise.
And as he awakens in soothing delight,
The waters grow playful, leaping to sight,

And a voice calls him gently,
"Dear boy, come with me;
I call to the sleeper,
I lure to the sea."

THE SONG OF THE SHEPHERD.

(On the mountain side.)

Ye meadows, farewell;
Ye bright sunny pastures,
The shepherd must leave you,
The summer is gone.
We'll clamber the Alp, we'll return with the springtime,
When the cuckoo calls and woods are in chime.
When the earth with flowers is clothèd gay,
And the brooklets ripple in loveliest May.
Ye meadows, farewell;
Ye bright sunny pastures,
The shepherd must leave you,
The summer is gone.

Ruodi (*the fisherman*).

Make haste, my boy, haul up the boat.
The misty Storm King[1] comes, the ice fields crack,
The Müthenstein[2] draws on his cloudy cap,
And cold it whistles from the mountain notch.
The storm will burst upon us ere we think.

[1] **Storm King,** or Vale King, a gray mist, foreboding stormy weather.

[2] **Müthenstein,** a rocky cliff on the opposite side of the lake.

Kuoni (*the shepherd*).

'Twill rain soon, fisherman; see how my sheep
Eat grass, and faithful watchdog paws the earth.

Werni (*the hunter*).

The fish are springing, and the water hen
Dives down. A tempest sure is brewing fast.

Kuoni.

Look, Seppi, that the herd stray not away.

Seppi (*the herd boy*).

Brown Lisel grazes near. I hear her bell.

Kuoni.

Then none is lacking, for she wanders most.

Ruodi.

A pleasing chime comes tinkling from your herd.
A handsome drove, and all your own, my friend?

Kuoni.

I'm not so rich. 'Tis all my gen'rous Lord's
Of Attinghaus, and trusted to my care.

Ruodi.

How well the neck-band fits yon graceful cow.

Kuoni.

She knows it too, as leader of the herd,
And taken from her, she would cease to feed.

Ruodi.

You lack in shrewdness. An unreasoning brute——

Werni.

'Tis lightly said. But brutes have reason, too.
We know it well, who hunt the mountain goats.
When grazing on the rocky slopes, so shrewd,
They place a guard, who, listening sharply,
Warns of hunters near with ringing note.

Ruodi (*to shepherd*).

Are you now homeward bound ?

Kuoni.

The grass upon the Alp is gone.

Werni.

A fortunate return to you.

Kuoni.

The same I wish to you.
Not always finds the hunter safe return.

Ruodi.

There comes a stranger running at full speed!

Werni.

I know him. 'Tis the Baumgart of Alzell'n.

Baumgarten (*breathless, rushes up*).

In God's name, ferryman, your boat! your boat!

Ruodi.

How now, what sudden haste is this?

Baumgarten.

Make loose,
And rescue me from death. Put me across!

Kuoni.

What have you done, my friend?

Werni.

Who follows you, I pray?

Baumgarten.

Quick, quick, for they are close upon my heels.
The bailiff's horsemen follow close behind.
And I am lost if they lay hands on me.

Ruodi.

Why come the horsemen in pursuit of you?

Baumgarten.

First rescue me, and then I'll tell you all.

Werni.

You are besoiled with blood. How happened this?

Baumgarten.

The Kaiser's bailiff, who at Rossberg dwelt——

Kuoni.

The Wolfschot![1] He in hot pursuit of thee?

Baumgarten.

He'll do no further harm, for he is slain.

All (*stepping back*).

God pity thee! What hast thou done?

Baumgarten.

What every freeman would in like distress.
My household right have I preserved against
Betrayal of my honor and my wife's.

Kuoni.

And did the bailiff wrong you in your honor?

Baumgarten.

That he brought not his evil deed to pass—
For this shall answer God and my good ax.

Werni.

And with the ax you cleft his head in twain?

Kuoni.

Come, let us hear it all, for you have time
While now the boat is loosened from the strand.

[1] A young Swiss noble, in charge of the castle at Rossberg, in Unterwald.

Baumgarten.

In woodland I was felling trees, when came
My wife in breathless haste and deadly fear.
The bailiff lay within my house, where he
Had bidden her prepare a bath for him,
And thereupon with shameless words he spoke
To her. But she escaped to search for me.
And I sprang straightway to him as I was
With ax in hand, and blessed the bath to him.

Werni.

And you did well; sure none can censure you.

Kuoni.

The shameless wretch! now has he his reward.
And long he's earned it from the mountain folk.

Baumgarten.

Quick rumor spread the deed. I was pursued.
E'en while we speak, my time slips fast away.

(*It begins to thunder.*)

Kuoni.

Quick, worthy boatman, put the good man o'er.

Ruodi.

It cannot be, a heavy storm o'erhead
Is coming on apace, and you must wait.

Baumgarten.

Great God!
I cannot wait, delay brings certain death.

Kuoni (*to the fisher*).

Now trust in God and serve a neighbor's need.
The like distress may chance to all of us.

(*Great noise and thunder.*)

Ruodi.

The South wind [1] rages and the sea goes high;
I cannot safely steer 'gainst storm and wave.

Baumgarten (*at his feet*).

May God help you as you now pity me.

Werni.

His life's at stake. Show mercy, fisherman.

Kuoni.

A father's he, with wife and children dear.

(*Repeated thunderclaps.*)

Ruodi.

And have I then no life to throw away,
No wife or child to mourn my luckless fate?
But mark the water, how it foams and roars,
And from its depths the sea is thrown aloft.
Full gladly would I save this man from death,
But how impossible, yourselves can see.

[1] The Föhn, or South wind, once raging, was very dangerous to navigation.

H. Kaulbach.

"SEE! WHO COMES THERE? IT IS THE TELL FROM BÜRGLEN."

Baumgarten (*still kneeling*).

Thus hopeless, must I fall in ruthless hand?
So near the shore of refuge to my sight.
There lies it now, outstretched in plainest view.
The voice can lightly send its call so far.
And there the boat would bear me quickly o'er
Whilst I stand helpless here in wretched plight.

Kuoni.

See! who comes there?
It is the Tell from Bürglen.

Tell (*with the crossbow*).

What man is this that prays to you for help?

Kuoni.

'Tis one from Alzellen who bravely stood
For honor and his household right against
The deputy at Rossberg, whom he slew.
The horsemen of the king are at his heels.
He begs for passage to the further shore;
The boatman fears the storm and will not move.

Ruodi.

There comes the Tell. He guides the rudder, too,
And he can say if passage may be risked.

Tell.

Where need is, boatman, there must all be risked.

Ruodi.

What! hurl myself into the jaws of death?
No man of sense would take such venture rash.

Tell.

The strong and manly soul thinks last of self.
Trust God alone and rescue him from death.

Ruodi.

Safe port lends easy comfort to advice.
There lies the boat; close by, the raging sea.
Make you the bold attempt.

Tell.

The sea can pity; his pursuers not.
Now come, make trial of it, fisherman.

Kuoni and **Werni.**

Yes! Save him! Save him! Save him!

Ruodi.

Were it my brother or my only child
It could not be. The sea is full of wrath,
And will not rest without an offering.

Tell.

With empty words is nothing brought to pass.
The moments speed and help must come.
Speak, boatman, will you try the sea?

Ruodi.

No, sir; not I.

Tell.

In God's name then, lend me your boat.
With my weak strength, perchance I'll rescue him.

Kuoni.

O! hardy Tell.

Baumgarten.

Thou art my helper and my angel, Tell!

Tell.

Mayhap I'll save thee from the wrath of man.
The storm's wild rage demands another's help.
But better far to fall in God's strong hand
Than into man's. Sir (*to the shepherd*), comfort thou my wife
Should threat'ning death o'erwhelm us in the storm.
I have but done what I could not refuse.

Kuoni (*to the fisherman*).

Oh, what a noble steersman! Could not you
Perform what Tell so bravely ventures on?

Ruodi.

Far better men would fail to rival Tell.
Among these mountains are not two such men.

Werni (*who has climbed to the top of a rock*).

He pushes off. God help thee, sailor bold!
See how the boat is tossed upon the waves!

Kuoni (*from the shore*).

The flood goes over her; she's sunk from sight!
But yonder reappears! Alert is he.
Strongly he struggles with the foaming floods.

Seppi.

There come the bailiff's horsemen, spurring on!

Kuoni.

'Tis they, in truth; help came in sorest need.

(*A troop of horsemen from Unterwald come galloping.*)

First Horseman.

Hand out the murderer whom you conceal.

Second Horseman.

This way he came; in vain you'll shelter him.

Kuoni.

Whom do you mean, Sir Knights?

First Rider (*discovering the boat*).

Ha! who is that? The devil master him!

Werni (*from above on the rock*).

What, sir! Is't he upon the boat you seek?
Ride briskly on, you may o'ertake him yet!

Second Rider.

A curse upon him. He's escaped.

First Rider (*to herdsmen and fisher*).

You've helped him to escape,
And you shall pay for it. Come! rend the herds;
Tear down the hut; burn and destroy!

Seppi.

O, my lambs!

Kuoni.

Alas! My herd is ruined.

Werni.

The shameless tyrants!

Ruodi.

Who'll bring deliv'rance to this wretched land?

Tell and Baumgarten managed to escape across the lake, and after landing made their way northward to the house of Werner Stauffacher, who lived close by the bridge, near Steinen, and in whose house Baumgarten could be safely hidden.

Stauffacher was a well-known man, and a leader among the people of Canton Schwyz. He had been prosperous with his flocks and herds, that grazed in summer far up the grassy slopes and mountain sides. A stately house had been built by him close to the bridge near Steinen. His barns were full of hay and his cattle were sleek. His wife, Gertrude, was a prudent woman, and their house, close by the great highway, was always open to friend and pilgrim. Stauffacher had many friends also in Unterwalden and in Uri, who had been kindly treated or entertained by him in his comfortable mansion.

One day the governor of Schwyz and Uri, Gessler, who had been sent by the King of Austria to rule these countries and to bring them into closer subjection to Austria, was riding from his castle at Küssnacht with his guards, along the highway at Steinen. Gessler halted by the linden tree before Stauffacher's door and scanned closely the house and grounds. Stauffacher was sitting on a bench by the linden tree. Rising promptly, he moved forward to greet the officer of the king, showing him that respect and honor which were due to his office. Gessler, though he knew Stauffacher and had passed the place before, asked roughly, "Whose house is this?"

Stauffacher saw at once that the governor was unfriendly, but he answered shrewdly:

This mansion is my noble lord the king's
And yours, good sir, and my entailed estate.

Then Gessler said,

I rule as regent here in Kaiser's stead,
And never will I grant that peasant churl
Shall build him houses freely as he list,
And live in princely hall with open hand
As if he lorded grandly over all.
I vow I'll find a way to hinder this.

Then off he rode in anger, and Stauffacher was left in sore perplexity. How could he prevail against an officer of the king, who might seize his flocks and house, and even bring him to prison or death? One day, soon after, his wife Gertrude found him sitting beneath the linden tree, his face resting on his hands and sadly brooding over the danger which threatened from Gessler. She had before

observed that he was deeply troubled, and now asked the cause.

Then he told her of what Gessler, the governor, had said, and she replied:

My honored husband, I have long since guessed
The secret cause of your distress and fear.
No friend of yours is this harsh governor
Who threatens boldly now to do you harm.
He deeply hates the freedom of the Swiss.
Your hospitable house, free mode of life;
Your strong and gen'rous love of old Swiss rights,
Still vex the tyrant in his castle strong.
You stand for justice and the ancient law
Of ample freedom for this mountain folk.
He bends our necks to fit the yoke of kings,
And plots the ruin of this peaceful land.

Stauffacher.

His malice toward me has indeed such cause

Gertrude.

He envies you since now you live in peace,
Secure and free upon your own estate,
For he has none. A younger son is he,
And naught he calls his own, save the rich cloak
He wears.

Stauffacher.

What can be done?

Gertrude (*stepping nearer*).

Pray listen to my word. You know that here
In Schwyz all worthy men lament the greed
And rank injustice of this tyrant lord.
Likewise in Unterwald and Uriland
The people are distressed and suffer wrong.
And now, 'twere well, methinks, that some of you,
Who know the common good, should council hold
How you may free the land from deeds unjust,
For I think, surely, God will not refrain,
But show Him gracious to a righteous cause.
Hast thou no faithful friend in Uriland
To whom thy heart may safely trust itself?

Stauffacher.

Of valiant men I know full many there
And likewise gentlemen of noble blood
Who stand in close and trusty league with me.
But wife! What storm of danger-bringing thoughts
Dost thou stir up within my quiet breast?
Mine inmost soul dost thou expose to light.
What I forbade myself in secret thought
That speak'st thou lightly forth with nimble tongue.
Hast thou weighed prudently this strong advice?
The wildest tumult and fierce sound of war,
Dost thou invite into this peaceful vale?
Should we, a small and feeble shepherd race,
Dare battle with the masters of the world?

Gertrude.

You, too, are rugged men and well know how
To wield the battle-ax. God helps the brave.

Stauffacher.

O wife! a fearful and outrageous thing
Is war. It smites the shepherd and the flock.

Gertrude.

We must with patience bear what heaven sends.
The noble heart bides not disgraceful wrong.

Stauffacher.

This house delights you which we late have built.
Destructive war will burn it to the ground.

Gertrude.

Felt I my heart a slave to transient good,
I'd surely light the torch with my own hand.

Stauffacher.

You trust in human gentleness. Grim war
Spares not the tender babe in smiling sleep.

Gertrude.

But innocence hath yet in heaven a friend.
Look forward, Werner, and not always back.

Stauffacher.

We men may bravely fall in battle stout.
But what a fate is that in wait for thee!

Gertrude.

The final choice stands open to the weak.
One leap from yon high bridge will set me free.

Stauffacher.

Who presses to his breast a heart so true
With joy may bravely fight for hearth and home;
Nor need he fear the might of any king.
Toward Uri I will speed with flying feet.
There dwells my trusty friend Herr Walter Fürst
Who'll share my anxious thought of threatened wrong.
There shall I also find the honored chief
Of Attinghaus: Although of noble blood
He loves the people and their ancient rights.
With both of these I'll counsel take, how we
May wisely rid the land of tyrant foes.
Farewell, and while I'm gone do thou direct
With prudent care the welfare of the house.

Approaching the town of Altorf, Stauffacher saw upon a hilltop the growing walls of a fortress or castle which Gessler had ordered built. The masons and carpenters were busy upon the unfinished framework and walls, which rose above a gloomy dungeon. Here Gessler had resolved to make a safe retreat for himself in case of trouble with the people. Into the dungeon, underneath the castle, he could thrust the bolder spirits who might dare to oppose his power.

Passing through the town, Stauffacher approached the home of Walter Fürst, the father-in-law of William Tell. At this very moment a young man, named Melchthal, was lment at the house of Walter Fürst. He had

lately escaped from the hands of Landenberg, the governor of Unterwalden. On account of some ill-will against Melchthal, and to punish him, the governor had sent his servant to the field where Melchthal was plowing with a choice yoke of oxen, with orders to seize and drive them away.

As the servant was unhitching the oxen from the plow he said to Melchthal: "If the peasant wants bread let him drag the plow himself." In sudden anger at these taunting words Melchthal struck the servant on the hand and wounded him. The servant reported this conduct to the governor, who ordered Melchthal to his presence, but the young man escaped to Canton Uri and found secret refuge at the home of Walter Fürst. Now Melchthal was in much distress lest the governor should seize his aged father, Henry of the Halden, and punish him in his stead.

As Stauffacher knocked, Walter Fürst opened the door and stepped back in surprise.

Walter Fürst.

Whom see I; you, Herr Werner? By my troth
A true and worthy guest; no better man
Has yet placed foot across this entrance way.
Why art thou hither come; what seekest thou?

Stauffacher.

The good old times of Schwyz and Uri, friend.
But here in Altorf dungeon walls are built
That please me not.

Walter Fürst.

O friend! one speedy glance has told you all.
Till now has Uri never seen such walls.

No prison tower has frowned upon these vales
Since flocks first grazed upon the mountain sides.
As freemen we have safely dwelt in peace.
But now the tyrant ruler makes us slaves.

Stauffacher.

Herr Walter Fürst, I will confess at once,
No idle, curious whim has brought me here
But weight of heavy cares. Distress I left
At home and like distress first greets me here.
Clean past endurance is the wrong we bear,
And of grim outrage can no end be seen.
You've heard the story of Baumgarten's deed,
Who slew the shameless Wolfschot at his home,
In wrath for flagrant insult to his wife?

Walter Fürst.

The judgments of the Lord are fair and right.
Baumgarten is a mild and worthy man.
Did he escape and find concealment safe?

Stauffacher.

The Tell did rescue him through stormy sea.
With me at Steinen he is well concealed.
More cruel still is this same man's report
Of deeds that late in Sarnen have befall'n.

Walter Fürst (*attentively*).

Speak on; what's happened there?

Stauffacher.

In Melchthal lives a just and worthy man
Named Henry of the Halden, known to all,
Who stands in good repute among his folk.

Walter Fürst (*anxiously*).

Who knows him not? What's happened him? Proceed.

Stauffacher.

The prince of Landenberg held grudge against
His son for slight offense, and gave command
To seize his choicest yoke of oxen at the plow.
The youth in anger smote the man and fled.

Walter Fürst.

But of the agèd father, what of him?

Stauffacher.

The Landenberg then bade the father come
And quick deliver on the spot his boy.
But when the old man swore in simple truth
He knew not where the son lay hid, this lordling
Let his servants come with torture's rack——

Walter Fürst (*springing up and trying to lead Stauffacher to one side*).

Be still, say nothing more!

Stauffacher (*with growing excitement*).

"Although thy son's escaped, I have thee fast,"
He said, and threw the old man to the ground
And drove the pointed steel into his eyes.

Walter Fürst.

Heaven be merciful!

Melchthal (*breaking forth from the adjoining room*).

Into his eyes, you say?

Stauffacher (*in surprise*).

Who is this youth?

Melchthal (*seizing him violently*).

Into his eyes? O speak!

Walter Fürst.

The wretched son!

Stauffacher.

Who is this youth?

(*At a sign from Fürst.*)

Is this the son? O righteous heaven!

Melchthal.

And I so far away. In both his eyes?

Walter Fürst.

Control thyself and bear it like a man.

Melchthal.

And for my fault, because of folly wild!
He's blind, then! Surely blind and sightless all?

Stauffacher.

So is't. The source of sight is wholly quenched.
The sun's clear light he ne'er will see again.

Walter Fürst.

Spare now to swell his grief.

Melchthal.

Never, never more!

(He presses his hands to his eyes and remains a time silent; then, turning from one to the other with soft and trembling voice, he speaks.)

O pure and spotless is the eye's clear light!
A gift from heaven! All beings live from light.
Each free and happy creature of the earth,
The plant itself, turns joyful towards the light.
But he must sit, still groping in the night
In hopeless gloom. For him no more the springing
Green of meadows and the flowers bright.
The gleaming glaciers will he never see.
To die is naught, to live and never see—
That is misfortune sore. Why look on me
So pitiful? I have two glowing eyes.
And cannot give the blinded father one.
No feeble shimmer of the sea of light
Whose dazzling brightness fills and floods my own.

Stauffacher.

This evil's at the flood. Shall we still wait
The last extreme?

Melchthal.

What worse extreme
Can still be feared if we no longer keep
Secure the precious jewel of the eye?

Are we so helpless? Tell me, honored friends,
Why learned we then to stretch the rugged bow
And wield the heavy weight of battle-ax?

Walter Fürst.

Were our three cantons joined, as three of us,
In faithful league, they might bring much to pass.

Stauffacher.

When Uri calls and Unterwald replies
The Schwyzer will respect the ancient league.

Melchthal.

In Unterwalden have I many friends,
And each will gladly venture life and limb,
If he may trust his neighbor's firm support.

Stauffacher (*to Walter Fürst*).

You shall decide. And I will follow you.

Walter Fürst.

Had we a friend at court in Austria
Our cause might rest upon the law and right,
But he who rules us harshly is the king,
Our final judge. And so our cause must stand
In God and our own strength. Sift thou the men
Of Schwyz; I'll search out friends in Uriland.
Whom shall we send likewise to Unterwald?

Melchthal.

Let me be sent. To whom is it more meet?

Fürst.

I grant it not. Thou art my guest; I'll keep
Thee safely here.

Melchthal.

Pray let me go.
Each secret pass and crooked mountain path
I know, and hosts of friends will gladly shield
Me from the foe and furnish friendly help.

Stauffacher.

God speed him on his way. In Unterwald
No traitor hides. For so detested is
This tyrant lord, he'll find no servile help.

Melchthal.

How tell we each the other his success,
And also keep suspicion from our foes?

Stauffacher.

We'll summon them at Brunnen or at Treib
Where still the merchant vessels often land.

Walter Fürst.

So open may we not recruit our friends.
Hear my advice. By western shore, as one
Steers north toward Brunnen, 'cross from Müthenstein,
There lies a meadow hidden in the woods.
'Tis called the Rütli 'mong the shepherd folk.
For there the forest trees were rooted out.
'Tis there the bound'ry mark is set betwixt

Your land and ours. And to this secret spot
The light canoe makes speedy course from Schwyz.
At night by unfrequented paths we'll find
This sheltered spot and secret council hold.
Let each bring with him to the tryst ten trusty
Men, who stand with us in heart and soul.
Thus we'll take council for the common weal,
And with God's help move on to worthy deeds.

Stauffacher.

So stands it. Now reach here your two right hands.
As we three men our hands thus firmly knit
So shall three states be bound in union strong
In mutual defense, for life or death.

Fürst and **Melchthal.**

For life or death.

THE MEETING AT RÜTLI [1]

Shortly after midnight at the hour agreed upon, Melchthal with his ten trusty friends from Unterwalden descended the steep, narrow path to the meadow at Rütli. It was girt round on three sides by rugged, forest-covered cliffs, and the other side was open to the lake, which lay quiet in the silver moonlight.

Melchthal (*with ten men, all armed*).

The pathway opens out. Come close behind.
This rugged cliff I know, crowned with the cross.
We've reached the spot. This is the Rütli shore.

[1] According to long-established tradition, this meeting at Rütli occurred on the 8th of November, 1307.

RÜTLI AND THE LAKE OF THE FOUR CANTONS.

Meyer.

'Tis empty. None are here. From Unterwald
We're first of all to reach the trysting place.

Melchthal.

Go some of you and start a blazing fire;
'Twill give a cheerful welcome to the men.

Baumgarten (*looking toward the lake*).

There glides a boat in silence by the shore.

Melchthal.

'Tis Stauffacher with all his trusty men.
The good man suffers us no long delay.

(*Melchthal and Baumgarten move toward the shore.*)

Melchthal (*standing above*).

Who's there? Give us the password true.

Stauffacher(*from below*).

The land's true friends.

All (*from above*).

All welcome! Welcome! Friends.

Melchthal (*to Stauffacher*). *While the others remain in the background, Melchthal and Stauffacher move forward.*

I've seen my aged father, blind and frail,
And laid my hand upon his sightless eyes.
Him thus and stripped of all his earthly goods,
The tyrant drove a beggar on the way

To sleep on other's straw and find refreshment
At the hearth of strangers kindly bent;
But he shall suffer for his evil deed.
Through all the crooked valleys of the mountain
As I passed the simple shepherds heard
With shame the story of my cruel wrongs
And gave sure pledges of their willing help.
Still more! 'Tis Rossberg's strong-built castle walls
And those at Sarnen, which our people dread,
For they give strength and safety to our foes.
I climbed to Sarnen's wall and searched its strength.

Stauffacher.

You dared to venture to the tiger's den?

Melchthal.

In pilgrim dress I climbed into the hold
And saw the cruel tyrant at his board,
In noisy revel, yet I slew him not.
But strong and firm has grown the secret league
Of valiant, faithful friends in Unterwald.

Stauffacher.

You have done nobly, friend, and more than brave,
Have well fulfilled the promise which you gave.

Winkelried.

Hark! There they come, the horn of Uri sounds.

(*On both sides armed men are seen coming down the mountain path with torches.*)

See, there descends the worthy Priest of God,
The pious pastor with his flock. Nor shuns he

Now the weary march nor chilly night,
A faithful shepherd, to his people bound.

(Walter Fürst, Rösselmann, and the rest come forward with greetings. All together, thirty-three men in number, they advance and form a circle about the fire.)

Walter Fürst.

Thus we must creep together stealthily;
Yes, here upon our own ancestral soil,
And, like base murd'rers in the gloom of night,
Which spreads its sable mantle over crime
And treason dark, must we lay hold of our
Good right, which yet is stainless and as clear
As is the splendor of the full-orbed day.

Stauffacher.

'Tis well; for what the gloomy night has spun
Shall freely spring to meet the glowing sun.

Rösselmann *(the priest)*.

Hear, friends, what God has spoken to my heart.
We stand in place of our assembled folk
And well may count us for the people whole.
So let our council keep the ancient usage
Of the land, as in more peaceful times.
Whate'er unlawful be in our assemblage
This let pressing need excuse. Yet God
Is over all, where man dispenses right,
And under His wide-spreading sky we stand.

Stauffacher.

So let us meet according to the ancient law;
Though it be night, still shines our perfect right.

Walter Fürst.

Here stands Herr Reding. He's a worthy chief.
Let him be leader and the council's head.
Who votes for him as chief lift up the hand.

(*All raise the right hand.*)

Reding (*steps forward*).

I cannot lay my hand upon the book,
So swear I by the shining stars above
That I will never swerve me from the right.
What brings together here our mountain tribes,
At this dread hour of midnight, on the shore
Of this rock-girt, inhospitable sea?
What purpose high emboldens this new league,
Now framed by us beneath the open skies?

Stauffacher.

It is not wholly new, the league we make,
But strong renewal of ancestral bond.
Though boist'rous lake and rugged mountains stretch
Between, and though each canton is self-ruled,
Yet spring we from one stock, are kith and kin.

All.

We are one race, united in our acts.

Stauffacher.

The other races take a foreign yoke,
But we are sprung from ancient Schwyzer stock,
And we have ever kept our freedom safe,
Nor unto princes have we bent the knee.
Of our free will chose we the king's safe guard.

Walter Fürst.

We will cast off from us the tyrant's yoke;
The ancient rights which we inherited
From old, ancestral times we'll keep unchanged,
The despots with their servile train expel,
And then break down the strong-built castle walls—
But, if it may be, without shedding blood.

Reding.

Take counsel how the battle may be won.
Our foe stands armed with weapons in his hand,
Nor yields without a struggle to our right.

Stauffacher.

Yes, surely when he sees us strongly armed.
For we shall take him, ere he is prepared.

Meyer.

'Tis quickly said, my friends, but hardly done.
Two strong-walled castles frown upon the land,
And give safe refuge to our tyrant foes.
Let Rossberg's walls and Sarnen first be scaled
Before a sword's drawn in our mountain states.

Walter Fürst.

When on th' appointed day the castles fall,
With smoke upon the mountain tops we'll give
From peak to peak the ancient muster-call
To all the tribesmen in the triple states;
And when the princes see us armed for strife,
Believe me, they will rather choose escape
And take safe-conduct gladly from our hands.

Stauffacher.

With Gessler still I fear a bitter feud,
So strong is he, begirt with armed knights,
He will not yield without a bloody bout.

Reding.

We'll wait in patience till the time is ripe.
The moment may advise what's best to do.

Rösselmann (*as morning dawns*).

As rises from the east this dawning light
We'll take the solemn oath of our new league
And still abide one race of brothers, strong;
We'll firmly stand in danger and distress.

All.

We will be freemen as our fathers were,
Choose rather death than life in slavery.
We'll trust in God for highest good.
And never fear before the power of men.

A SWISS HAMLET.

Stauffacher.

And now let each return in quiet to
His home, to faithful friends and kindred folk,
Each shepherd tend his winter herds in peace,
And win in private friendship for the league.
Whate'er of wrong, till then, must be endured,
That suffer. Let the tyrant's wicked reck'ning
Grow apace, till on one day, the common
And the special wrong shall meet their due.
Let each one temper still his righteous wrath,
And spare his vengeance for the common wrongs,
For he is guilty of a public theft
Who wrecks, for selfish ends, the common good.

As the men silently separate, passing off in three directions, the morning light floods the mountain tops, and as it gradually brightens, the first rays of the rising sun are reflected from the snowy summits and glaciers.

Some time before the meeting at Rütli, Gessler, the governor, had made a visit to Altorf, where he decided to subject the temper of the people to a severe test. On the public common or square at Altorf he caused a pole to be set up and a hat to be placed on the top of it, with orders that all people of the canton, passing by, should bow to it, and remove their hats as if the emperor or governor were present. He also placed guards by the pole to see that the order was obeyed. He thought in this way to win some renown by forcing obedience from this brave and simple-hearted people.

The aged Count of Attinghaus, who lived in Canton Uri, was much distressed by the harsh rule of the governors sent by Austria. Feeble with age, and suffering with his

final illness, he summoned his nephew and heir, Rudenz, to his presence and begged him to join the party of the common people against the rulers. But Rudenz was already in sympathy with the Austrian princes, because he thought, with their aid, to win the hand of Bertha, a young and beautiful Swiss heiress, in marriage. Some time afterwards, however, he discovered that Bertha was in full sympathy with the three cantons in their opposition to the rulers. She easily persuaded him, then, to join the popular party and to become a leading champion of the common people in the great struggle for freedom.

THE YARD BEFORE TELL'S HOUSE.

Tell appears with an ax at work. Hedwig is busied with some household employment. Walter and William are seen in the background, playing with a small crossbow.

Walter (*singing*).

Bearing bow and arrow,
Over vale and height
Comes the daring hunter,
In the morning light.

As through regions airy
Sweeps the eagle's flight,
Free o'er steep and valley
Sways the hunter's might.

His a wide dominion,
Far as arrow flies,
Checks the bird's swift pinion,
Takes the wild beast prize.

My bowstring's snapped; come fix it, father.

Tell.

Not I. The trusty bowman helps himself.

Hedwig (*his wife*).

The boys too soon have learned to shoot.

Tell.

'Tis early practice trains the master's hand.

Hedwig.

Would heaven they'd never gained this skill!

Tell.

Dear wife, 'tis well they all things bravely learn.
For those shall hew a rugged way through life,
Who conquer skill to smite or ward the blows.

Hedwig.

Alas! not one can find repose at home.

Tell.

Nor I, myself, good wife.
By nature I'm not framed to guard the flocks.
I, restless, ever chase a fleeting aim,
And drink life's full, unstinted joy,
When I can face fresh dangers ev'ry day.

Hedwig.

And little think'st thou of the wife's distress
Who waits thy coming with an anxious heart.
For I am filled with fear and nameless dread
At what they tell us of thine exploits bold.

Each time thou go'st my heart misgives and fear
Springs up that thou may'st never come again.
I see thee lost among the icy Alps,
A false step hurls thee from the beetling cliff,
Or windy avalanche descends and covers thee,
Or 'neath thy foot the treach'rous ice gives way
And thou sink'st down to living death
In shudd'ring cold and darkness drear.
Death dogs the reckless Alpine hunter's steps
Each day in hundred changing, frightful forms;
And how ill-fated is that narrow path
Which skirts the edge of peril at each step.

Tell.

With fresh and watchful eye and sense alert,
Who trusts in God and his own practised skill,
Shall lightly wrest himself from danger's threat.

(*Putting away his tools.*)

Hedwig.

And whither goest thou?

Tell.

To Altorf—to thy father, dear.

Hedwig.

Is some new danger threat'ning? Tell me true.

Tell.

What makes you think so, wife?

Hedwig.

Some plot's on foot
Against the rulers. For at Rütli was
The meeting held, and you are in the league.

Tell.

I was not present there. Yet will I not
Refuse the call of country when it comes.

Hedwig.

They'll station you where chiefest danger lies,
The hardest task will always be your lot.

Tell.

Each man is taxed at his full worth.

Hedwig.

Through fearful, raging storm, across the lake,
You dared to rescue Baumgarten. 'Twas wonder
That you perished not. Did you not think at all
Of wife or child?

Tell.

Dear wife, I thought of you,
And saved the father for his children's sake.

Hedwig.

Yes, you are good and helpful, serving all,
But when in need yourself, there's none will help.

Tell.

May God forbid that I have need of help.

Hedwig.

Why take you now the crossbow? Leave it here.

Tell.

My arm is useless, when the bowstring fails.

(*The boy returns.*)

Walter.

Where, father, are you going now?

Tell.

To Altorf, boy.
To grandfather. Will you go, too?

Walter.

Ay, that I will.

Hedwig.

The governor's now there, so keep away.

Tell.

He goes to-day.

Hedwig.

Let him then first depart.
Wake not to life the strong ill will he bears.

Tell.

Wife, his base will can bring me little hurt.
I do the right and shun not any foe.

Hedwig.

Who do the right are those he chiefly hates.

Tell.

For them—he cannot reach to do them harm
And me, I think, he well may leave in peace.

Hedwig.

So, know you that!

Tell.

It is not long ago
That I went hunting through the wildest gorge
Of Schächen's vale, on unfrequented path,
And as I climbed the lonesome, rocky trail,
So narrow that two friends could hardly pass—
For over me hung steep the mountain wall
And under me roar'd fearfully the flood—
There straight before me came the governor,
He all alone, and I who single stood,
Just man to man, beside the chasm deep;
And as he saw me in the narrow path,
And knew me, whom short time before
For trifling cause he had done bitter wrong,
And now approaching saw with steady step
And crossbow on my arm; so pale he grew
His knees began to shake and I perceived
He soon would sink beside the mountain wall.
Then pity came to me, and, stepping forth,
With due respect, I said, "'Tis I, my Lord."
But he could bring forth not a single sound
From his parched throat, but with his trembling hand
He beckoned me in silence to go on.
Then forth I went and met his coming train.

Hedwig.

He trembled at thy presence? Woe to thee,
That thou hast seen him weak; he'll not forgive.

Tell.

Then I'll shun him, and he'll not search for me.

Hedwig.

[illegible] from the town to-day [illegible] hunt instead.

Tell.

[illegible] wife?

Hedwig.

[illegible] Keep away.

Tell.

[illegible] a cause?

Hedwig.

[illegible] stay here.

Tell.

[illegible] come.

Hedwig.

[illegible] leave the boy with me.

Walter.

[illegible] him.

Hedwig.

[illegible] desert me so?

Walter.

I'll bring you something good from grandfather.

(*Goes with his father.*)

William.

Dear mother, I will stay with you.

Hedwig.

Yes, you are still
My solace. Only you are left me now.

SCENE AT ALTORF.

A common at Altorf. Trees toward the front, and in the background a hat upon a pole. Beyond rises the Bamberg, with snow-capped mountains at its back. Friesshardt and Leuthold keeping watch.

Friesshardt.

In vain we stand on guard. There's not a man
Will come to show the hat due reverence.
At other times 'twas like a market place,
But now a desert's not more bare than this,
Since from this pole a scarecrow hat was hung.

Leuthold.

'Tis but the beggar mob presents itself
And doffs its dirty caps to our contempt.
But proper decent folk would rather take
A journey long round half the village streets,
Than they would bend the neck before this hat.
My comrade, hark, it glimmers in my mind,

We stand a spectacle, before the hat.
'Tis deep disgrace for knights of honest fame
To play the guard before an empty hat;
Each common fellow holds us in contempt
That we show reverence before a hat.
'Tis but a stupid mandate we obey.

Friesshardt.

Why bow not then before an empty hat?
You bend ofttimes before an empty pate.

Leuthold.

And you yourself would play the servile rogue,
And gladly bring honest folk to grief.
Let whoso will pass by before the hat
I'll close my eyes and look another way.

(*Three women pass by.*)

Mechthild (*a peasant woman*).

There hangs the governor; respect, my lads!

Elsbeth.

Would God he'd go and leave with us the hat,
It would the better be for this fair land.

Friesshardt.

Will you make room! Despised women folk!
Who asks for you? Send rather here your men,
If they have grit to stand and scorn respect.

(*Enter Tell with crossbow, and Walter.*)

MONUMENT TO WILLIAM TELL AT ALTORF.

Tell (*to his boy*).

See'st thou the ice fields there, the two white horns,
Which rise aloft almost into the sky?

Walter.

Yes, glaciers those, which thunder in the night,
And send the sudden avalanches down.

Tell.

So 'tis, and long ago the avalanche
Had hurled its load upon the village here
To bury it, had not the forest strength
Stood like a mighty bulwark 'gainst its power.

Walter.

Are any lands without such mountains tall?

Tell.

As one goes downward from these snowy peaks
And still descends along the winding vales,
A great and level land comes into view,
Where mountain streams no longer brawl and foam,
But peaceful rivers glide through meadows green.
The eye unhindered looks toward every side;
There grows the corn in green, far-stretching fields,
And all the land a garden's fruitage yields.

Walter.

Yes, father; why not then descend we straight
To dwell in this fair land of promised good,
Nor longer plague us on these barren hills?

Tell.

The land is fair and beautiful as heaven,
But those who plant it are not they who reap
The harvest which they till.

Walter.

And live not they
As free as you upon their own estate?

Tell.

The field belongs to bishop and to king.

Walter.

But still they're free to hunt among the woods?

Tell.

The prince inherits game and wild fowl, too.

Walter.

They may then fish in freedom by the streams?

Tell.

The stream, the sea, the salt are all the king's.

Walter.

Who is this king of whom all stand in dread?

Tell.

He is the one who keeps and shelters all.

Walter.

And may they not as bravely guard themselves?

RÜTLI AND URNERSEE.

Tell.

The neighbor there trusts not his fellow man.

Walter.

It's all too close for me in that broad land.
I'd rather live beneath the avalanche.

Tell.

Yes, child, 'tis better, far, methinks, to have
The glaciers at your back than evil men.

(*They pass by.*)

Walter.

There, father, see the hat perched on the pole!

Tell.

What care we for the hat; come, let's be off!

Friesshardt.

Now, in the Kaiser's name; halt ye and stand!

(*He seizes Tell.*)

Tell (*grasps his spear*).

What will ye, sirs? Why do you hold me here?

Friesshardt.

The king's commands you scorn; so follow us.

Leuthold.

You have not shown due homage to the hat.

Tell.

Friend, let me go.

Friesshardt.

Away! Away with him to prison walls!

Walter.

My father into prison? Help! Come help!
This way, good people all, be quick. By force
They seize and carry him away!

(*Enter Rösselmann, the priest, Petermann, the sexton, and three other men.*)

The Sexton.

What's the matter here?

Rösselmann.

Why lay your hand upon this man?

Friesshardt.

He's foeman to the king whom he betrays.

Tell (*seizes him violently*).

I a traitor, man?

Rösselmann.

You're wrong, my friend; that is
The Tell, a citizen and man of worth.

Walter (*seeing his grandfather*).

Grandfather! help. They drive him off to jail.

Friesshardt.

We'll to the prison! Away!

Walter Fürst (*in haste*).

Stay, friends. I'll quickly furnish bail for him.
In God's name, Tell, explain; what's happened here?

(*Enter Melchthal and Stauffacher.*)

Friesshardt.

The Kaiser's royal edict and command
He has despised and will not show respect.

Stauffacher.

The Tell has done this thing?

Melchthal.

You lie, you scoundrel.

Leuthold.

He would not show respect unto the hat.

Walter Fürst.

And therefore goes he off to prison? Friend,
Take now my offered bail and let him go.

Friesshardt.

Give surety for yourself and your own good.
We do but what's our duty. Off with him!

Melchthal.

No; that's outrageous wrong. Shall we bear this
That they should drag him off before our eyes?

The Sexton.

We are the stronger, friends, permit it not.
We stand as one, each backed by neighbor's strength.

Friesshardt.

Who will resist the governor's command?

Three others (*rushing up*).

We'll help you, too. What is't? We'll down the knaves.

Tell.

I'll help myself, good friends; so leave me thus.
Think you, were I to use my native strength,
That I should tremble at their pointed spears?

Melchthal.

An't please you, dare to take him from our midst.

Fürst and **Stauffacher.**

Hold, friends, be still!

Friesshardt.

'Tis riot and rebellion, this!

(*A horn is heard.*)

Women.

There comes the governor!

Friesshardt.

Rebellion! Mutiny!

Stauffacher.

Yell, villain, till you burst!

Rösselmann and **Melchthal.**

Will you keep silence, sir!

Friesshardt (*calling still louder*).

Bring help! Protect the servants of the law!

Walter Fürst.

There is the chief! Alas! How will this end?

(*Gessler on horseback, a falcon upon his wrist. Rudolph, Rudenz, Bertha, and a throng of armed knights and soldiers forming a circle of spears.*)

Rudolph.

Make place before the governor!

Gessler.

Disperse the mob!
What draws the crowd in throngs? Who calls for help?

(*All the people grow quiet.*)

Who was't? I will be told.
(*To Friesshardt*). Stand forth!
Say who you are and why you seize this man?

(*He gives the falcon to a servant.*)

Friesshardt.

Stern master mine! I am your man at arms
And well appointed guardian of the hat.
This man I seized in bold and overt act
As he refused the hat due reverence.
The people also throng to set him free.

Gessler (*after a pause*).

Then do you so despise your Kaiser, Tell,
And me who here am ruler in his place

That you refuse due honor to the hat
Which I, to test your loyalty, set up?
Your wicked purpose have you thus betrayed.

Tell.

Forgive me, honored sir. 'Twas thoughtlessness
And not contempt for you that it befell.
Were I quick-witted, they'd not call me Tell.
I pray for grace. It shall not be again.

Gessler (*after a long pause*).

You are a master with the crossbow, Tell,
Men say you'll measure skill with any man.

Walter Tell.

And that is true, my lord. My father hits
An apple on the tree at hundred steps.

Gessler.

Is that your boy, my Tell?

Tell.

Yes, mine, my lord.

Gessler.

Have you still other children?

Tell.

Two boys are all, my lord.

Gessler.

And which of these do you then chiefly love?

Tell.

Good sir,
As children fond, alike they're dear to me.

Gessler.

Since you can smite the apple from the tree
At hundred steps, so shall you give to me
Full proof of this your skill. Now take your bow
—You have it close at hand—prepare yourself
To shoot an apple from this stripling's head.
Yet will I caution you, aim well, that you
May strike the apple at a single shot,
For if you fail, your head will forfeit pay.

(*All the people show signs of horror.*)

Tell.

What dreadful thing, my lord, would you impute
To me, that I, from head of my own child—?
No, surely no, good sir, that cannot be
Your thought—forbid it, God—It cannot be
Your earnest wish to ask a father this.

Gessler.

The apple you shall shoot from this boy's head;
I do require it, and it is my will.

Tell.

I am
To shoot with tightened bowstring at the head
Of my own child? I'd rather perish here.

Gessler.

You'll shoot, or die with this your child.

Tell.

I shall be driv'n to murder my own child?
Good sir, you have no children, do not know
What feelings rise within a father's heart.

Gessler.

Why, Tell, you all at once become discreet.
Men say to me that you're a dreamer daft
And shun the beaten track of common men,
And love a freakish sport, and therefore have I
Searched you out a bit of your own craft.
For others might well hesitate, but you
Blink tight the eyes and seize the happy chance.

Bertha (*a young Swiss woman of rank*).

Jest not, my lord, with this unhappy folk,
You see them pale and trembling stand; so little
Have they heard such jesting from your lips.

Gessler.

Who told you that I was in jest?
(*He seizes an apple branch above his head.*)
Now take the apple here.
Let room be made, the space be measured off,
As is the custom, eighty steps I give,
Not less nor more. But e'en he boasted
That at hundred steps he'd strike the spot.
Now, marksman, shoot and fail not of your aim.

Rudolph.

Sure that's no idle jest! Fall down, my boy,
There's need, and beg his lordship for your life.

Walter Fürst (*at one side, speaking to Melchthal, who can scarcely restrain himself*).

Command yourself, I beg of you; keep still.

Bertha (*to Gessler*).

Let this suffice, my lord. It is inhuman
Thus to rack in sport a father's grief.
If now this wretched man, by light offense,
Has life and limb in forfeit placed, Great Heav'n,
He has already suffered tenfold death.
So let him go unhindered to his home.
You, now, he knows full well, and of this hour
Will he and his grandchildren mindful be.

Gessler.

Make clear the path; be quick. Why do you stay?
Your life is forfeit. I could speak your death.
But see, in mercy still I place your fate
In your own strong and practised hand.
No man henceforth can raise a bitter plaint
Who's made to-day the master of his fate.
You boast you of your steady eye. Well, then!
'Tis needful, bowman, that you show your skill.
The mark is worthy and the prize is great.
To strike the target's center is an art
Which others equal. He alone is master
Whose firm nerve is steady under any
Strain. Whose heart leaps not to shake the hand
Nor dim the eye.

Walter Fürst (*kneels before Gessler*).

Sir, my lord, we bow before your highness.
Still, let mercy for the right prevail;
Take half of all my goods, yea, take the whole,
But grant him quick release from this dread task.

Walter Tell.

Grandfather, up; kneel not to this false man.
But tell me where to stand. I fear it not.
My father strikes the bird upon the wing
Nor will he fail on peril of his child.

Stauffacher (*to Gessler*).

Are you not touched by this child's innocence?

Rösselmann.

Consider that a God in heaven dwells,
To whom you must give answer for your deeds.

Gessler (*pointing to the boy*).

Come, bind the boy to yonder linden tree.

Walter Tell.

Bind me!
No, sir, I will not thus be bound. I will
Stand still as any lamb, and scarcely breathe.
If you should bind me—No, it cannot be,
For I would surely rage against my bonds.

Rudolph.

But rather let your eyes be bound, my boy.

Walter Tell.

But why my eyes? Do you think, sir, I fear
The arrow from my father's hand? I will
Look straight, nor twitch the lashes of my eyes.
Quick, father, show that you're a bowman skilled.
He trusts it not, but thinks to ruin us.
Confusion to the tyrant, shoot and hit.
(*He goes to the linden tree and sets the apple on his head.*)

Melchthal (*to Stauffacher*).

What! shall this fell crime unroll itself
Before our eyes? Why formed we then the league?

Stauffacher.

'Tis all in vain, we have no weapons here.
You see the grove of lances circling us.

Melchthal.

O, had we moved to action swift and sure!
God pardon them who counseled this delay!

Gessler (*to Tell*).

To work! We bear the sword and not in vain.
'Tis dangerous to wear death-dealing arms.
The arrow oft rebounds against the bow.
And this proud right which rude-born peasants claim
Insults the highest ruler of the land.
Let no one carry arms save those who rule!
Be glad, you bear the bow and arrow still,
Whereto I'll set the mark to guide your skill.

Tell (*strings the bow and sets the arrow*).

Make free the path. Give place.

Stauffacher.

What, Tell, you'll venture? Nevermore! You shake,
And palsied is your hand; your knees give way.

Tell (*suffers the bow to fall*).

I'm dizzy; all things whirl before my eyes.

Women.

God in heaven!

Tell (*to Gessler*).

Release me from the shot. Here is my heart.

(*He exposes his breast.*)

Command your armèd men to strike me down.

Gessler (*to Tell*).

'Tis not your life I seek. I'll have the shot.
You can do all things, Tell, at naught dismayed.
You guide the helm with skill to match the bow.
No storm can daunt you where there's life to save.
Now, helper, help yourself. You rescue all.

(*Tell is seen in fearful conflict, moving his hands wildly, turning his eyes now upon the governor, now to heaven. Suddenly he seizes a second arrow from his quiver and sets it in his belt. The governor notices all these actions.*)

Walter Tell (*under the tree*).

Shoot, father, for I dread it not.

Tell.

So must it be.

(*He commands himself and lays on the arrow.*)

Rudenz (*who has stood the whole time in violent strain and mastered himself with difficulty, steps forward*).

My lord, you'll press not to the last extreme.
You surely will not, sir. 'Twas but a test.
Your purpose has been gained. Too much enforced
Your rigor will o'erreach itself and fail
As when too tightly drawn the bowstring snaps.

Gessler.

Keep silence till you're summoned, sir.

Rudenz.

But I will speak.
I dare. The king's good name is sacred here.
But such misgovernment must harvest hate,
'Tis not the purpose of the king. I dare
Assert it. For my people merit not
Such cruelty. To this you're not empowered.

Gessler.

Ha, you grow bold!
Such language, hothead, to your lord?

Rudenz.

The Kaiser is my lord, not you. I'm born
As free as you and measure me your peer
In ev'ry virtue of an honest knight.
And stood you other than in Kaiser's place

Whom I respect, where others bring him shame,
I'd throw the gauntlet at your feet and you
Should answer me at once in knightly sort.
Yea, summon me your bravest knights. I stand
Not unarmed here as these—(*pointing to the people*)—
I have a sword,
And who comes near——

Stauffacher.

The apple there has fall'n!

(*While all were turned toward Rudenz and the governor, Tell had let fly the arrow.*)

Rösselmann.

The boy still lives.

(*Walter Fürst trembles and seems about to fall.*)

Gessler (*in wonder*).

He dared the shot, the madman!

Bertha.

The boy still lives. Revive thyself, good Tell.

Walter Tell.

See, father! here's the apple. Well I knew
That you would not bring harm to me, your boy.

(*Tell stands with body leaning forward as if to follow the arrow. The crossbow drops from his hand. As the boy comes he hastens toward him with outstretched arms and clasps him lovingly to his heart. In this position he sinks powerless to the earth. All are deeply touched.*)

Bertha.

O kindly heaven!

Walter Fürst.

Children, Oh my children dear!

Stauffacher.

God be praised!

Leuthold.

That was a shot. Of this
Will people tell in latest times to come.

Rudolph.

And while these mountain rest upon their base
So long the story will be told of Tell.

(*He hands the apple to the governor.*)

Gessler.

My troth! the apple's through the center shot.
It was a master stroke which I must praise.

Rösselmann.

The shot was good, but woe to you who drove
Him to the deed, that you should dare tempt God.

Stauffacher.

Tell, rouse yourself. Stand up. By manly skill
You are redeemed and may return in peace.

Rösselmann.

Come, haste, and to the mother bring her son.

(*They start away with him.*)

Gessler.

Tell, hear me yet!

(*Tell comes back.*)

Sir, what command you now?

Gessler.

You thrust
A second arrow in your belt. Yes, yes,
I saw it well. What was your purpose, pray?

Tell (*much confused*).

Sir, that is merely custom with the bow.

Gessler.

No, Tell, that answer will I not accept.
It had another meaning, I am sure.
Speak but the truth with free and open mind;
Whatever it may be, I promise you
Your life. What purpose had the second shaft?

Tell.

Well, then, my lord,
Since you have surely promised me my life
So will I tell you plainly the whole truth.

(*He draws the arrow from his side and with a threatening look at the governor, he says.*)

If I had touched the head of my dear child,
This second arrow, sure, had pierced through you.
And verily would I not have missed my aim.

Gessler.

Now, Tell, your life I surely promised you
And gave my word of honor, which I keep.
But now that I have learned your wicked thought,
I'll guide and house you in a place secure
Where neither moon nor sun will lighten you,
That I may dwell in safety from your shafts.
Lay hands upon him men, and bind him fast.
(*Tell is bound.*)

Stauffacher.

How now, my lord,
Beware, can you deal harshly with a man
In whose behalf God's hand is clearly shown?

Gessler.

Mark well if God will rescue him again.
Conduct him to my ship. I follow straight,
Myself will guide him to strong Küssnacht's tower.

Rösselmann.

That is not right, nor would the king dare that.
It violates our charter-granted rights.

Gessler.

Where are they? Did the king confirm them? When?
He never has confirmed them. No. Such grace
From him must through obedience be won.
You're rebels, all of you, against the king's
Command, and stir up desperate revolt.
I know you all, and pierce your whole disguise.

Him safely I'll remove from out your midst.
But all of you are sharers of his guilt.
Whoever's wise, keep silence and obey.

(He rides away. Bertha, Rudenz, Rudolph, and soldiers follow. Friesshardt and Leuthold remain.)

Walter Fürst.

Now all is lost. He has the purpose fell
To ruin me with my whole fated house.

Stauffacher (*to Tell*).

O why did you still more inflame his wrath?

Tell.

Let him be moderate who's felt my grief.

Stauffacher.

And now all's lost, yes, utterly. With you
In chains, we all are fettered and bound down.

The people (*surrounding Tell*).

With you departs our help and strong defense.

Leuthold (*draws near*).

'Tis pity sure, but still I must obey.

Tell.

Farewell.

Walter Tell (*clasping his father in violent grief*)

O Father! Father! Father dear!

Tell (*raising his arms toward heaven*).

Your Father dwells above, my child. Pray Him.

Stauffacher.

Tell, bear I then no message to your wife?

Tell (*lifting the boy and pressing him to his breast*).

The boy's unhurt and God will care for me.

(*Tears himself away and follows the guards.*)

THE STORM.

On the southeast shore of Lake Lucerne three persons have met and have been discussing the events at Altorf, the apple shooting, etc. Steep, towering cliffs shut out the view to the west. The lake is disturbed with violent motion of wind and wave, and there is intermittent thunder and lightning of an approaching storm.

(*Gersau, Fisherman and Boy.*)

Gersau.

I saw it with my eyes. Then rest assured,
That all came so to pass as I have said.

Fisherman.

The Tell a captive, doomed to dungeon keep,
The ablest man, the strongest arm in Schwyz,
When once the struggle's on for home and right.

Gersau.

The governor conducts him o'er the lake.
They were prepared t'embark upon the ship
As I from Flülen came, but yet the storm,
Which even now is coming on apace—
And drove me to a hasty landing here,—
May well have hindered their departure thence.

Fisherman.

The Tell in fetters in the tyrant's power!
O he'll be walled so deep in dungeon gloom
That he will never see the light again.
His lordship well may fear the righteous wrath
Of this free man whom he caused bitter grief.

Gersau.

The storm grows wilder yet, so fare you well.
I'll take me to the village inn. This day
I'll think no longer of departure thence.

Fisherman.

The Tell in prison and the old count dead.[1]
Lift up your shameless brow, dread Tyranny,
Throw off all honest shame. The tongue of truth
Is dumb. The prophet's piercing eye is veiled.
The arm which might bring rescue is in bonds.

Boy.

The hail beats down. Go, father, to the hut.
It is no fitting time to house abroad.

Fisherman.

Go mad, ye raging winds; strike down, ye bolts,
And burst, ye clouds. Pour out your streams
From heaven and deep drown the land. Destroy,
In germ, the unborn children of the race;
For who would longer live when freedom's dead?

[1] The Count of Attinghausen, the most trusted friend of the Swiss, had died just before this.

Boy.

See how the deep is tossed, the whirlpool roars.
Ne'er yet raged such a storm in this deep gorge!

Fisherman.

To level crossbow at his own child's head!
Such mandate never to a father came;
And nature shall not rise in sudden wrath
At such misdeed? I wonder that these cliffs
Sink not their heads in shame beneath the sea.
That yon high mountain peaks and icy towers,
Which melt not since creation's early dawn,
Hurl not their proudest summits to the deep.

Boy.

But hark! They toll the bell on yonder peak!
Some one has surely seen a ship in need
And tolls the bell that prayers be offered up.

Fisherman.

Woe tide the ship that now is under way,
And in this fearful cradle sorely rocks.
Here is the helmsman useless and the helm.
The storm is master, wind and wave play havoc
With the works of man; nor far nor near
Is harbor which could give them safe retreat.
Abrupt and stern, steep rising from the depths,
The dark, inhospitable cliffs oppose
And lift their rugged, stony breasts to view.

Boy.

A ship, dear father, drives from Flülen here!

Fisherman.

God help th' unhappy crew. For when the storm's
Once firmly caught in this deep mountain cleft,
Then rages it with all the wild beast's wrath,
Which wrenches at the cage's iron bars,
And, howling, vainly seeks escape.
For on all sides the rugged cliffs shut in
And, heaven high, wall up the narrow strait.

Boy.

The ship's my lord's of Uri, father; see!
I know it by the gilded deck and flag.

Fisherman.

God's judgment sure; yes, he it is.
There rides the governor. So he embarked
And carries with him in the ship his crime.
Full swift the arm of vengeance found him out.
Now sees he over him a mightier hand.
The angry waves heed not his feeble voice.
The rocky cliffs bow not their stately heads
Before his hat. Pray not, my boy, for him.
Disturb the Judge not in His righteous will.

Boy.

I pray not for the governor, I pray
For Tell who also ships among his crew.

Fisherman.

O folly dire of these blind elements,
Must they, in wrath, to smite the guilty soul,
Bring ruin down on ship and helmsman too?

Boy.

See, see, already they have safely passed
By Buggisgrat, yet mighty is the storm,
Which, backward bounds from Teufelsminster's rock,
And hurls them straight against great Axenberg.
I cannot see them now.

Fisherman.

There is the Hackmesser
Where ships not few have gone to wreck.
Should they not wisely turn this danger point,
Their ship will fly to splinters on the rock
Which there abruptly sinks into the deep.
They have a doughty pilot still on board.
Could any helmsman save, 'twould be the Tell.
But his strong hands and arms are bound.

While they are watching the boat it passes out of view. The tempest continues. Still the fisherman and his boy remain for a time, observing the storm from the eastern shore. After a while they see a man coming forward with rapid step, who looks about him in astonishment and shows great excitement. As he comes into plain view he falls to the ground and stretches his hands toward earth and heaven.

Boy (*seeing him*).

See, father, who's the man that's kneeling there.

Fisherman.

He clutches at the earth with both his hands,
And seems to be almost beside himself.

Boy (*moves closer*).

What see I, father? Father! come and see!

Fisherman.

Who is it? God in heaven! What! The Tell?
How came you here? Speak quickly, man!

Boy.

Were you not yonder
In the ship; a captive and in bonds?

Fisherman.

You were not carried off to Küssnacht's tower?

Tell (*stands up*).

I was set free.

Fisherman and **Boy.**

Set free? Oh, wonderful!

Boy.

Whence come you here?

Tell.

From yonder in the ship.

Fisherman.

What?

Boy.

The governor; where's he?

Tell.

Upon the waves he drives.

Fisherman.

Is't possible? But you, how came you here,
Set free at once from fetters and the storm?

Tell.

Through God's most gracious Providence ; come, hear.

Fisherman and **Boy.**

Yes, tell us! tell us!

Tell.

What took place
In Altorf, know you that?

Fisherman.

We know it all, speak on.

Tell.

And how the soldiers seized and bound me fast,
To bring me safely on to Küssnacht's hold?

Fisherman.

And thence embarked with you at Flülen there,
We know it all. Speak on, how you escaped.

Tell.

I lay within the ship with cords close bound,
Defenseless, a lost man, without a hope
That I should see again the sun's warm light,
Nor loving glance of wife or children dear,
And in despair gazed at the wat'ry waste.

Fisherman.

O wretched man!

Tell.

Thus we embarked from thence
The governor, with Rudolph and his train.
My quiver and my crossbow lay the while
At farthest stern removed, close by the helm,
And as we reached the turning of the point
By smaller Axenberg, there God ordained
That such a fearful, murder-wreaking storm
Broke headlong down from Gothard's hollow gorge
That every sailor's heart sank deep, and all
Seemed fated to a miserable death.
And then I heard a servant of the chief
Who quickly turned and spoke to him these words:
"You see our need and yours, my lord, and that
We all are trembling on the verge of death.
But all the sailors are benumbed with fear,
And know not what to do; for they're not skilled
To guide the rudder. But the Tell is here,
A fearless man who well can guide a ship.
What then, if we employ him in our need?"
Then spake to me his lordship, "Tell, if you
Have faith that you can wrest us from this storm
I will release you gladly from your bonds."
Then spake I to his lordship: "Sir, with God's
Good help, I trust to guide us through the storm."
So I was quickly freed from cruel bonds
And stood before the rudder, and steered true,
But sidewards glanced to where my crossbow lay.

H. Kaulbach.

TELL'S ESCAPE.

And on the shore I sharply searched along
Where some projecting shelf might give safe hold.
And now I soon perceived a rocky ledge
Whose level top juts outward to the sea——

Fisherman.

I know the place, below Great Axenberg,
But I'd not think it possible, so steep
It falls, to spring upon it from the ship.

Tell.

I cried the oarsmen stoutly to their oars
Till we should come 'longside the rocky shelf,
There, shouted I, the worst would be o'er past.
And as we, rowing briskly, reached the place,
I prayed God's favor earnestly, and drove,
With all my living powers full-stretched,
The ship's high stern straight 'gainst the rocky wall;
Then swiftly seized my crossbow near, and swung
Myself with hardy leap up to the shelf,
And with the utmost force of springing foot
Drove back the puny ship into the deep.
There drifts it in God's hands upon the waves.
So I am here, thus rescued from the storm's
Wild wrath, and from the still worse hands of men.

Fisherman.

Tell, Tell, a striking wonder hath the Lord
Performed on you. I scarcely trust my eyes.
But say, where now will you betake yourself?
For safety never can be yours, if once
His lordship 'scapes from out this storm.

Tell.

I heard him say, while yet upon the ship
In chains I lay, that he would land at Brunnen,
Thence past Schwyz conduct me to his keep.

Fisherman.

Will he then thither take his way by land?

Tell.

Such was his purpose plain.

Fisherman.

O then conceal yourself without delay.
Again will God not save you from his hand.

Tell.

Show me the road to Küssnacht and to Arth.

Fisherman.

The open highway close by Steinen runs,
And yet a shorter path, more secret far
Leads on through Lowertz, where my boy will guide.

Tell (*giving him his hand*).

Let God reward your kindness. Fare you well.

(*Goes, and then turns back*).

Did you not also take the Rütli oath?
Methinks I heard the mention of your name.

Fisherman.

Yes, I was there,
And I have sworn the oath of this new league.

Tell.

So haste to Bürglen. Kindly bear this news.
My wife's distressed for me. Announce to her
That I am rescued now and safe concealed.

Fisherman.

But whither shall I tell her thou art fled?

Tell.

You'll find the worthy Fürst, her father, there,
And others who at Rütli took the oath.
Pray them to be alert and of good cheer;
The Tell is free and master of his arm.
Soon they shall hear some further news of me.

Fisherman.

What have you then in mind? Fear not to speak.

Tell.

When it is done, 'twill quickly come to speech.

(*Departs.*)

Fisherman.

Show him the way, my boy. God stead him well.
His aim once set, he'll bring it to success.

THE NARROW PATH AT KÜSSNACHT.

There are lofty mountains in the background. The approaching traveler is first seen upon the heights. Mountains surround the whole view. On one of the foremost cliffs is a projecting shelf with a growth of bushes.

Tell (*appears above with the crossbow*).

Straight through this narrow gorge his path must lead;
No other road guides him to Küssnacht's walls.
So here I'll stand, the place is haply found.
Those elders, thickly set, will hide the view,
And from that spot my trusty shaft can reach.
The narrow way will hinder the pursuit.
Make final reckoning with Heaven, my lord,
Thou'rt summoned hence, thine hour hath come.
I lived so still and blameless and my shaft
Was pointed only 'gainst the wild beast's lair.
My secret thoughts were pure from murder's stain.
From out my peaceful habit thou hast rudely
Wakened me and turned the milk of kindness
Into poison of the Dragon's brood.
Thou hast accustomed me to dreadful things.
Whoso can set for target his child's head
Can wing the arrow to his foeman's heart.
The little children, blameless innocents,
And faithful wife must I protect against
Thy ruthless will. That fatal hour as I
The bowstring drew, my hand still terror smit,
As thou with horrid, murd'rous glee still drov'st
Me on, to level at the child's dear head,
As I, in bitter anguish, plead with thee—
That hour I vowed within my inmost soul,
With solemn oath which only God could hear,
That the unerring aim of my first shot
Should be thy heart. What I thus pledged
In that dread hour of fearful grief and strain—

It is a solemn debt which I will pay.
Thou art my lord and from my Kaiser sent,
But not the Kaiser had allowed himself
What thou usurp'st. He sent thee to this land
To deal out justice—sharply, for he's wroth—
But not, intent with such malignant joy,
To hazard every wrong and crime unchecked.
There lives a God who'll punish and avenge.

(*To his bow and arrow.*)

Come forth, thou messenger of bitter pain,
My trusty jewel now, and treasure best.
I'll give thy point a mark, which, till this hour,
Was stony proof against sweet mercy's prayer;
But thou shalt pierce it through and through. And thou,
My trusty bow, whose rugged strength so oft
Hast served me truly in the sportive games,
Desert me not in this my solemn need.
Still once again hold firm my tough bowstring,
Which oft hast winged for me the piercing shaft;
Luckless should'st thou escape my falt'ring hand,
No second arrow can my skill command.
When oft I wandered, venturesome, from home,
A happy greeting waited my return.
For never I came back, but brought them aught,
Were it a fragrant Alpine flower; or were
It then some stranger bird or curious stone
Such as the wand'rer finds upon these hills.
The hunter now pursues another trail,
He guards the mountain path with murd'rous thoughts.
'Tis foeman's life for which he lies in wait.

A wedding train passes by and up through the narrow gorge. Tell observes it, leaning upon his bow. Stüssi, the field warden, approaches him.

Stüssi.

There goes the rent-master from Mörlischachen,
On his bridal trip, a wealthy man,
Who keeps some ten good shepherds with their flocks.
He goes to greet his bride at Immisee,
And holds to-night high revels at Küssnacht.
Come with me, for each good man's welcome there.

Tell.

A solemn guest fits not the marriage feast.

(*Tell, in a restless manner, looks toward the road.*)

Stüssi.

Then keep you well. You wait for some one here?

Tell.

Yes, that I do.

Stüssi.

A happy home return!
You are from Uri, friend. Our gracious lord,
The governor's, expected thence to-day.

Wanderer comes.

Wait not the governor to-day. The streams
Are all in flood and swoll'n with heavy rains,
And all the bridges have been swept away.

Friesshardt (*Comes in haste down the narrow road and calls out*).

Make clear the narrow way, my worthy lord,
The governor, comes riding close behind.

Stüssi (*to Friesshardt*).

How came you through the streams,
Since torrent floods have swept away each bridge?

Friesshardt.

We've battled with the raging sea, my friend,
And have no longer fear of Alpine brooks.

Stüssi.

You were on shipboard in the mighty storm?

Friesshardt.

We were. I'll think of it my dying day.

Stüssi.

O stay and tell of it!

Friesshardt.

Beg pardon, I must on,
To tell the coming of his lordship home.

Gessler (*on horseback, to Rudolph*).

Say what you will, I'm servant to the king
And must consider what will please him best,
For he has sent me to this people not
To soothe and flatter them. Obedience
He asks; the conflict is between the peasant
And the Kaiser, which shall rule the land.

At Altorf I did not set up the hat
For sake of sport, nor yet to make a test
To try the people's heart. I long have known.
But I did set it up that they might learn
To bend the neck which they too proudly hold.
I caused the irksome thing to stand in sight,
Where they perforce must see it in their path,
That they should stumble on it with their eyes
And so recall their lord whom they forget.

Rudolph.

And yet the people, too, have certain rights.

Gessler.

This is no fitting time to weigh them out;
This little folk must first obedience learn.

(*A woman, Armgard, throws herself at the feet of the governor.*)

Armgard.

My lord, have mercy on us and grant help!

Gessler.

What, woman! Block me in the open way!
Give place!

Armgard.

My husband long in prison cell has lain;
His starving children cry for bread. Show grace,
Good sir, and pity our misfortunes sore!

Rudolph.

Who are you then, and who's your husband, pray?

Armgard.

A wretched forester, from Rigiburg,
Who mows away the grass by sloping crags
Where grazing cattle will not dare to feed.

Rudolph.

In God's name, what a mean and slavish work!
I pray you, set him free, the wretched man.
Good woman, bring your case to yonder hall,
Here's not the place.

Armgard.

No sir, I'll not withdraw me from this spot
Until his lordship speaks my husband free.

Gessler.

What, woman! wilt thou use compulsion? Hence!
Begone!

Armgard.

Justice, my lord. Thou art the judge through all
This land, placed here to serve in Kaiser's stead.
Do but thy duty. As thou hop'st for justice
From above, so grant it now to us.

Gessler.

Away! Take from my sight this brazen folk.
(*To the woman.*)
Give way, else will my horse go over you.

(*Armgard throws herself with her children before Gessler in the way.*)

Gessler.

Where are my guards?
Come drag them quickly hence, lest I forget
Myself and do what I'll repent me of.

Rudolph (*to Gessler*).

Your servants cannot make the pass, my lord.
A wedding train blocks up the narrow pass.

Gessler.

An over gentle ruler I have been
Toward this folk. Their tongues are still too free.
It is not wholly conquered nor subdued,
But it shall be transformed, I vouch for it.
I will break down this stubborn temper yet,
This bold and reckless spirit I will bend.
Another law throughout these lands will I
Promulgate—I will——

(*An arrow pierces him, he presses his hand to his heart and begins to sink; with feeble voice he speaks.*)

God be merciful to me!

Rudolph.

My lord! In heaven's name! What's that, and whence?

Armgard.

Murder! Murder! See! He trembles! sinks!
Straight to the heart the shaft has smitten him!

Rudolph.

What fearful deed is this? Pray God, my lord.
Beseech His gentle mercy now. For death
Has laid its hand on you.

Gessler.

This arrow is the Tell's.

(He is lifted down from his horse by Rudolph, and placed upon the bank.)

Tell *(from above at the top of the cliff).*

Thou know'st the bowman well; seek then none else.
Our homes are free, and safe is innocence
From thee. Thou wilt no longer threat the land.

Rudolph.

Away! bring help! Pursue the murderer.
O lost and ruined man! So ends your life.
But never would you heed a warning voice.

Stüssi.

By heaven, there lies he pale and lifeless.

(The people gather around the death scene of Gessler and show signs of joy at his end. Rudolph becomes angry and threatens to scatter them with his sword. Stüssi steps up and seizes him by the arm.)

And dare it, will you, sir?
Your wicked rule has reached its end. The tyrant
Of the land has fall'n: no longer now
We'll suffer hateful wrong, for we are free.

(All, in a tumult of voices.)

The land is free!

Rudolph.

And has it come to this?
So swiftly vanish both respect and fear?

(Speaking to the troopers who press forward.)

You see, my friends, the dreadful, murd'rous deed
Which stains this spot. All help is here in vain.
'Twere fruitless now to track the murderer,
For other cares press hard; to Küssnacht, on!
That we may hold his castles for the king.

(*As Rudolph and his troopers pass out of view, the Brothers of Mercy appear.*)

Chorus.

(*They form a half circle about the dead man, and in deep tones they chant.*)

Swift comes the hour of death to man,
No tardy respite can be given.
It hurls him headlong in his plan.
From life's full course his soul is riven.
Prepared or not, no subterfuge
Can stay him from his righteous judge.

PUBLIC PLACE AT ALTORF.

In the background are the walls and the scaffolding of the castle, Zwing Uri, which was described as building in the first part of the story. On the left is a view among many high mountains, upon which the signal fires are burning. It is early morning, and the bells are heard sounding on many sides.

(*Ruodi, Kuoni, Werni, Master Mason, and others of the people. Also women and children.*)

Ruodi.

Behold the signals on the mountain peaks!

Master Mason.

Hear ye the bells from o'er the wooded hills?

Ruodi.

Our enemies are put to flight.

Steinmetz.

The castles have been tak'n.

Ruodi.

And we in Uriland should suffer still
This tyrant stronghold on our native soul?
Arc we the latest to proclaim us free?

Master Mason.

Why stand these walls as proof of despot will?

All.

Then down with them! Yes, down!

Ruodi.

Where is the Stier von Uri?

Stier von Uri.

I'm here! What is your will?

Ruodi.

Go climb the highest watch and blow the horn,
That it far pealing through the mountains ring,
And ev'ry echo from the rocky cliffs
Shall swiftly waken all the mountaineers
And summon them to gather here.

(*Stier von Uri goes away and Walter Fürst appears.*)

Fürst.

Now hold, good friends, still hold.
As yet we have no news from Unterwald,
Nor what in Schwyz has happened. Let us wait
For messengers——

Ruodi.

Why should we wait? The tyrant's dead;
The day of freedom has appeared.

Master Mason.

Is't not enough, these flaming messengers
Which far and wide on all the mountains glow?

Ruodi.

Now come, lay to, come all, both men and youth
Break down the scaffold, spring the heavy arch,
And overturn the walls. No stone shall keep
Its place upon another.

Master Mason.

Yes, come, my comrades, we have built it up
And we know how to bring it low again.

All.

Come, tear it down.

(From all sides they rush upon the walls.)

Melchthal *(entering).*

What's this? still stand these walls? In ashes lie
The towers of Sarnen, and the Rossberg's fall'n.

Walter Fürst.

O Melchthal! Are you come the messenger
Of freedom? Is the land yet swept of foes?

Melchthal.

The soil is ours; rejoice then, worthy sire.
At this glad moment while we speak
No tyrant longer breathes in Schwyzer land.

Walter Fürst.

O speak, how mastered you the castle walls?

Melchthal.

'Twas Rudenz did a bold and manly deed.
He climbed the Sarnen walls and brought them low.
The Rossberg I had scaled the night before.

Walter Fürst.

Where is the Landenberg?

Melchthal.

Beyond the Brünig he is fled.
That he who quenched my father's sight should bear
With him the light of day was not my will,
So I pursued him, overtook his flight,
And sternly dragged him to my father's feet.
The sword already trembled o'er his head,
But tender mercy of the blind old man
Brought back to him in tears the gift of life.
A solemn oath he took ne'er to return,
And he will keep it, for our strength he's felt.

Walter Fürst.

'Tis well you fouled not stainless victory
With bloody deed.

Children.

(*Running across the scene carrying pieces of the wreck.*)
Freedom! Freedom!
(*The horn of Uri is blown with might.*)

Walter Fürst.

Lo, what a festal time! This glorious day
Our children will remember to old age.

(*Young girls bring the hat carried on a pole. The whole scene fills up with people.*)

Ruodi.

This is the hat, to which our neck must bend.

Baumgarten.

Now give command, what shall be done with it?

Walter Fürst.

God wot! Beneath this hat my grandchild stood.

Several voices.

Destroy this token of the tyrant's power
And give it quickly to the flames.

Walter Fürst.

No, let it be preserved.
Once servile token of the tyrant's power,
'Twill be the sign of freedom from this hour.

(*The people—men, women, and children—form a half circle sitting upon the beams of the broken scaffolding.*)

CHAPEL IN MEMORY OF WILLIAM TELL.

Melchthal.

So stand we now with joy upon the wreck
Of tyrant strength, and grandly is fulfilled
The oath, my comrades, we at Rütli swore.

Stauffacher.

Where is the Tell? Shall he alone be absent now
Who is the founder of our joy? The bravest
Deeds he did, the worst extremes endured.
Come, all of you! Let's rally to his house
And heap with blessing him who freed us all.

LAST SCENE.

(The space before Tell's house.)

(A fire burns on the hearth. The door stands open. Hedwig, Walter, and William.)

Hedwig.

To-day the father comes, my dearest boys.
He lives, is free, and all are free alike.
And 'tis your father, children, saved the land.

Walter.

And I was witness, mother, to the deed.
My name is mentioned with the rest. The father's
Shaft sped swift its flight close to my life,
Nor did I tremble.

Hedwig *(clasping him).*

Yes, thou art given back
To me, and twice I've brought thee into life.

Twice suffered I for thee the mother's pain.
But all is past. I have you both—yes, both;
This day comes your dear father home again.

Walter (*springing up*).

O mother! Even now he's here (*runs out*).

Hedwig.

O gracious heaven!

William.

The father!

Walter (*without*).

You're home again!

William.

Father! my dear father!

Tell.

Yes, home again; where is your mother, lads?

Walter.

There stands she at the door and cannot stir.
She trembles so for fear and yet for joy.

Tell.

O Hedwig, Hedwig, mother of my boys,
God brought us help, no tyrant parts us more.

Hedwig (*clasping his neck*).

O Tell, what anguish I have had for thee!

Tell.

Forget it now and live to happiness.
And I am here, this is my cottage still,
And once again I stand among my own.

out).

William.

You have no crossbow, father; where is it?
I see it not.

Tell.

Nor shall you see it here again.
Upon memorial wall 'tis safely hung.
Henceforth 'twill never serve the hunter's need.

Hedwig.

O Tell, dear Tell.
(*Shrinks back and drops his hand.*)

er!

Tell.

What frightens thee, dear wife?

Hedwig.

How art thou come to me again? This hand,
Dare I then touch it? Yes—this hand——

Tell (*boldly and heartily*).

It sheltered thee and served the common good,
And I dare lift it freely now toward heaven.

The whole deep vale before Tell's house, with the heights which shut it in, is spread out before the view. The people are seen gathering from all sides. Others still come along the high mountain path which crosses over the

Schächen. Walter Fürst, with the two boys, Melchthal, and Stauffacher, comes forward to the front of the scene, while others press after. As Tell and Hedwig appear, all the people greet them with loud shouts of joy, which are echoed from the mountain side.

All together.

Long live the Tell, our helper and defense.

According to legendary history, soon after the outbreak of the cantons against their rulers, the king of Austria was killed by his nephew on account of alleged injustice. In the confusion which followed the death of the king, the Forest Cantons remained for a time in much anxiety, but they were not seriously disturbed. The death of Gessler and the overthrow of the castles remained therefore unpunished, and the cantons were later confirmed in their rights.

THE END.

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